Programme (BEP) referred to above, the proposal for opening of branches at rural centres identified by the banks within their service area and received through the concerned State Government duly recommended are considered by Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on merit. On this basis, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has allotted 264 centres to banks for opening their branches in rural areas. As regards, semi-urban centres, the banks have freedom to open branches at the centres of their choice within the quota allotted to them on all India basis. No Statewise quota has been allotted for the purpurpose of opening branches at semi-urban centres. Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has reported that it has allotted 1290 semi-urban centres for opening of branches in the country. In respect of Urban/Metropolitan/Port Town centres, allotments are made on the basis of centres identified by the Working Groups constituted at Regional Offices of Reserve Bank of India (RBI). As per information received from Reserve Bank of India (RBI), 985 centres have been allotted to banks by Reserve Bank of India in the country for opening branches in such areas. Under the current Branch Expansion Programme (BEP), banks have freedom to open specialised branches viz. Industrial Finance, Overseas, SSI/SIB, NRI Treasury branches etc. after ensuring adequate business at the centre. Such proposals are not required to be referred to Reserve Bank of India for approval. Proposals other than these which do not conform to Reserve Bank of India (RBI)'s norms for specialised branches are, however, to be referred to RBI for prior approval. The banks are required to open the branches at the allotted centres by the end of Branch Expansion Programme (BEP) 1990-95 i.e. 31st March, 1995. However, the opening of branches at the allotted centres is subject to availability of basic infrastructural facilities like availability of suitable permises, all weather roads, tele-communication centres etc.

Import of consumer goods

86. SHRI GUNDAPPA KORWAR: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Union Government propose to liberalise import of consumer goods under the instructions of World Bank; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M. V. CHANDRASHEKHAR MURTHY): (a) and (b) Review of the Export and Import Policy is an on-going and continuous process and changes are made from time to time as and when considered necessary.

Modified value-added tax

87. DR. NAUNIHAL SINGH: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a massive scam in which premier industries in the Hosur industrial area (Karnataka) took advantage of the modified Value added Tax (MODVAT) to cheat the Excise Department has been busted; if so, the details thereof and the amount involved; and

(b) what steps have been taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M. V. CHANDRASHEKHAR MURTHY): (a) The detections indicated that in these cases Modvat credit had been availed of, *inter-alia*, on inputs/documents which were not covered by the legal provisions. The estimated amount of Modvat credit taken wrongly or irregularly is approximately Rs. 1.9 crores. These cases are under investigation or adjudication.

(b) Special Modvat audits and more intense anti-evasion checks are being organized to detect evasion of duty by unscrupulous assessees. Simul-